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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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APRIL PLENTIFUL FOODS

PROCUREMENT SECTION
CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

Fruity And Nutty. For April peanuts and peanut products are joined on the Plentiful Foods List by fresh oranges, frozen concentrated orange juice, chilled orange juice, canned orange juice, canned cranberry sauce, cranberry juice cocktail, and dry beans. In May the List will include cranberry sauce, cranberry juice cocktail, dry beans and split peas, fresh oranges, frozen concentrated orange juice, chilled and canned orange juice, eggs, peanuts and peanut products, corn grits, and corn meal.

USDA FOOD-PRICE INFORMATION

Where It Comes From: How To Get It. USDA's Economic Research Service produces a series of situation reports that give lots of answers to food price questions. If you want to know what's ahead for food prices or what's affecting the prices of major foods, the quarterly National Food Situation has answers. How much of the grocery bill goes to the farmer, to the shippers, processors, and distributors? The quarterly Marketing and Transportation Situation provides these figures, in terms of the familiar "market basket of farm foods." Price Spreads for Farm Foods, a USDA new release, updates the market basket statistics each month. Other situation reports which may be used as background in understanding the complexities behind food trends include the Fruit Situation, Vegetable Situation, Livestock and Meat Situation, Dairy Situation, and Poultry and Egg Situation. They are issued four to six times each year. All of the situation reports frequently carry analytical articles of special interest. Some recent articles include "Fresh Beef Ads and Product Names," "Nutritional Review," and "Enrichment and Fortification of Foods." If you are in the food business or write about food or teach about it, you will find a wealth of information and answers in one or more of the situation reports. Single copies of the reports are free on request or you may want to receive copies regularly. Send your name, address and zip code, specifying the situation report titles you want, to Publications Unit, OMS Information Division, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.



SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

When You Buy Food. There is planning the menu carefully; making and sticking to a shopping list; hunting economical recipes; taking advantage of unit pricing and those "cents-off" coupons; comparing prices. . . all important steps in smart food shopping. But, to complete the overall picture, here are some additional pointers to keep in mind:

- * Put nutrition first on your shopping list. Well-balanced meals each day are still essential for growing children and grownups alike. Don't shirk on the nutrition you need to keep healthy and on the go.
- * Practice "truth-in-eating". Deduct from your grocery bill all those non-food items you buy at the supermarket--the soaps, toothpaste, napkins. But add to your bill the food your family purchases away from home--school and cafeteria lunches, snacks, meals out. That way, you will discover how food costs actually fit into your total budget.
- * Be a kitchen experimenter. Many continental "gourmet" dishes, for example, were invented long ago to dress up economical cuts of meats with careful spicing and long cooking. Or, to substitute another protein food for the meat. Your cookbooks probably contain a wealth of gourmet specialties including old world dishes featuring eggs and cheese. Once mastered, gourmet preparation is not too time consuming--and the results can be so delicious.
- * Use available information for more tips on food buying. USDA has a number of such consumer publications including two new ones just released. One compares the cost of protein in meats and meat alternates (eggs, cheese, dry beans, etc.) and one gives ideas for low-cost menus and recipes for one week for a family of four. Free copies of "The Cost of Meats and Meat Alternates" and of "Money-Saving Meals" may be requested from SERVICE, Room 541-A, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

LARGE FAMILIES -- SMALL FAMILIES

And Prices They Pay For Food. Small families that cannot efficiently use economy-size packages of food are generally believed to pay higher prices per unit of food purchased, than larger families that can use, say, a large box of cereal or a 10-pound bag of potatoes. A USDA study of prices paid by urban families across the country shows that small families did indeed pay higher prices per unit (pound, package, etc.). A person living alone paid prices 11 percent higher and a two-member family paid prices 7 percent higher than those paid by a household of six. But the study indicated that size of food unit alone was not the only thing that made price differences: some of the differences are due to the quality, grade, and brand of the foods selected. Also, large families were less well off than small families, on the average; they had lower incomes per person and used a larger proportion of income for food. Therefore, lower prices paid by larger families resulted partly from their selecting lower grades or less expensive varieties of foods. To measure overall price differences, the cost of a single market basket of food was figured, using average prices reported by households of 1 to 6 persons.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Lillie Vincent, Editor of SERVICE, Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Telephone (202) 447-5437.
